

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 University Avenue, Historical Context

By the late 1880s, the role of University Avenue, then known as Eighth Street, was already well established as a link between the original Riverside town site - today's Downtown--and the expansive citrus areas to the east. Subdivision activity also occurred during this period, through about 1910, rapidly expanding Riverside's residential neighborhoods into what is today the long-established Eastside community. Riverside quickly filled out to its original city limits at Chicago Avenue with Eighth Street emerging as both a residential street and a commercial corridor.

Early Riverside was dramatically affected by the continuing emergence of the citrus industry as the principal underpinning of the local economy. Adjunct growth in the industry firmly established itself in 1907 with the founding of an agricultural research station at the current University of California at Riverside (UCR) campus. The role of the facility remained until 1954 when the College of Letters and Science was established. At this point, the role of the emerging school was poised to take off. By 1958, the school became designated as a general campus of the University of California, and graduate work began in the 1960 school year. In 1960, the City also moved to annex the campus and surrounding area, resulting in a dramatic easterly expansion of the City's physical limits. Today, UCR is an important easterly "anchor" for University Avenue.

The automobile has been a profound factor shaping the emergence of University Avenue. Before large-scale completion of the Riverside (State Route 91) and Pomona/Escondido (State Route 60) freeways, University Avenue served as an important state highway link between the greater Los Angeles area and communities to the east and the desert.

The emergence of the former Riverside International Raceway just east of Riverside helped further solidify the geographic importance of University Avenue. This, in combination with its accessibility to the state highway traffic put University Avenue in the role of supplying services to a travelling public, Raceway participants and, of course, Riverside's own surrounding neighborhoods. This post-World War II-era expansion created a corridor where shopping facilities, restaurants, automobile service facilities and motels abounded.

Post-World War II expansion in Southern California was a period of dramatic growth and expansion in the region's transportation infrastructure. By the 1960s, freeway construction now included State Routes 60 and 91 through Riverside, bypassing University Avenue. The City's 1966 general plan report was already referencing city efforts to upgrade University Avenue - efforts which had been only partially successful. More street trees and stricter sign regulations were being suggested as strategies for improving the Avenue's appearance in order to make it worthy of its name and its function as the link between Downtown and the University.

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University growth which might have breathed new life into the corridor to make up for the loss of travelers was slower-to-come than had been anticipated. Moreover, by the mid- 1980s, the Raceway was beginning to wind down its operations in preparation for a scheduled closing and conversion to new suburban uses. The cumulative effect was that by the 1990s, the economic role of University Avenue had taken a dramatic change.

1.2 Other Related Planning Efforts

Over the years, a number of other plans and studies have been undertaken directly affecting University Avenue. The chronology of evolution in these plans and studies is especially revealing in underscoring the great importance which has been attached to the role of University Avenue within the overall urban fabric of Riverside. The various efforts include the following:

! University Community Plan

This plan, adopted in 1968 as a subcomponent of the City's General Plan, focused land use and related issues on the unique character of the University environment.

! Eastside Community Plan

Prepared in 1974, and a functional companion to the University Community Plan, the Eastside Community Plan narrows the focus of the General Plan to the unique needs of this long-established and historic residential community bordering University Avenue. The plan's boundaries underscore the importance of viewing revitalization of University Avenue in the context of its synergistic role with the adjoining, long-established Eastside community.

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! Central Industrial Area Redevelopment Plan

First adopted in 1977 and subsequently amended in 1984, the plan seeks to actively implement the University Community Plan through an active redevelopment program. Long-recognized as needing direct public involvement in economic and housing revitalization, the area's redevelopment plan targets resources and programs to help rejuvenate the project area. See Figure 4 for the boundaries of the Central Industrial Redevelopment area.

! 91/60 Committee

A committee of businessmen and property owners was formed to address improvement of University Avenue. In 1985, a streetscape plan was prepared to be financed by an assessment district, which proposed widening the street, a landscaped median and palm trees in easements on private property.

! Riverside Downtown/Central Industrial Development and Implementation Plan

As a strategic plan, this document sharpens the area's redevelopment focus by defining specific commercial, residential, design, and development objectives for the City's program efforts.

! The University of California at Riverside Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), July 1990

At the opposite end of the Avenue from the Riverside Marketplace development, growth of the UCR campus will introduce and catalyze dramatic new university-oriented development. Guiding that growth in concert with community objectives is the focus of the LRDP.

! University Avenue Strategic Development Plan, 1990

Commissioned by the City's Redevelopment Agency, the strategic plan's purpose was to outline an overall vision for University Avenue and prepare a strategic plan of action to guide the Agency in its revitalization efforts. The plan established key parameters for development along University Avenue allowing flexibility for the Agency to respond to changing market, economic, institutional, and other conditions.

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! The Riverside Marketplace Specific Plan, May, 1991

A cornerstone project, the Riverside Marketplace development represents a giant step forward in anchoring development along the University Avenue corridor at its Downtown end. The development will yield dramatic land use changes, as well as generating needed economic activity, business expansion, and jobs generation. The Marketplace development begins at Park Avenue, the westerly limit of this University Avenue Specific Plan.

! University Avenue Streetscape Concept, April, 1991

Recognizing the need for physical improvement to the appearance and vitality of University Avenue, the Streetscape Concept defines a program for capturing the majesty of previous tree planting efforts while enhancing the Avenue's appearance recognizing contemporary economic goals. The concept is intended to be the means by which civic, business and property interests can work together for the physical renovation of the Avenue.

! University Avenue Interim Zoning

Over the years, several targeted efforts have been made through zoning-related changes to assist in the revitalization of University Avenue. The most recent actions of the City to reverse the direction of decline took place in March, 1991, when Interim RO-Zoning was applied to the Avenue as a precursor to undertaking a thorough design and development standards review of the Avenue. Preparation of this Specific Plan was initiated in direct response to the interim zoning.

The interim zoning regulations generally applied to parcels fronting University Avenue between Park Avenue and I-215 and certain other immediately adjacent parcels (*Urgency Ordinance 5900*, placing RO zoning on all projects, adopted March 5, 1991, and extended on April 9, 1991 for 10 months and 15 days).

! Draft Riverside General Plan 2010

As an update to the existing general plan, the year 2010 plan will chart a course for change throughout the City, including University Avenue, for improvements in the overall quality of life, neighborhood preservation, and physical improvement in the City's urban fabric.

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1.3 The Stage for Future Action

When viewed from a regional perspective, the conditions found on University Avenue are not unique among commercial strips. Whether it be the analogous situation of the effect of suburban shopping development on the decline of downtowns, or the dramatic reshaping of the urban landscape by freeways, or changing settlement patterns of a mobile population, University Avenue's fortunes have change with these and other external factors. Left alone, there is little prospect for an early reversal; with guidance and a partnership effort, University Avenue can become a centerpiece of urban life in the years ahead.

1.4 Relationship of the Specific Plan to the General Plan and Authority for Adoption

1.4.1 Authority

State law authorizes local governments with certified General Plans to prepare and adopt Specific Plans. (Government Code 65450 et seq.) At a minimum, a Specific Plan must include "all detailed regulations, conditions, programs, and proposed legislation which shall be necessary for the systematic implementation of each element of the General Plan" (Government Code Section 65451).

The Specific Plan, once it is approved, will augment the zoning for the area, including land uses permitted, the amount of development permitted, and standards for that development. Secondly, it defines the character and form of the development on the site through a series of design guidelines. The Specific Plan serves as a supplement to existing City regulations. Specific Plan regulations supersede other regulations where there is a conflict; where a topic is not addressed by the Specific Plan, other City regulations apply.

1.4.2 Validity

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of the University Avenue Specific Plan is for any reason held to be invalid by decision of any court or competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of the Plan.

1.4.3 Applicability of the Specific Plan

The University Avenue Specific Plan shall be applied only to the specific properties east of Park Avenue and west of State Route 60/Interstate 215 as indicated in Figure 2. The Specific Plan boundaries shall be shown on the "Official Zoning Map" of the City of Riverside by adding the designator "SP" to the base designation.

For those areas of the General Plan's University Community Plan and Eastside Community Plan which are encompassed by the University Avenue Specific Plan, the Specific Plan shall supersede those portions of the community plans.

1.4.4 Conflicts with Underlying Zone Designation

In the event of a conflict between the requirements contained in this Specific Plan and the underlying zone designation for the property in question, the Specific Plan shall prevail.

Figure 3 illustrates the underlying zoning at the time of the Specific Plan preparation. The "Official Zoning Map" of the City should be consulted to determine the underlying zone designation in effect.

1.4.5 References to the Zoning Code

All references to the Zoning Code in this Specific Plan mean Title 19 (Zoning) of the Riverside Municipal Code, and that all such citations are incorporated into this Specific Plan by such reference.

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[Figure 3 - Underlying Zoning](#)